

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Final Office Action dated March 6, 2009 and the reference cited therein have been carefully considered. In response to the Office Action, Applicant has amended Claims 1 and 14 and canceled Claim 4, which, when considered with the remarks set forth below, are deemed to place the case with Claims 1-2, 5-7 and 9-14 in condition for allowance.

In the Office Action, Claims 1-2, 4-7 and 9-14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as being anticipated by, or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being obvious in view of, German Patent No. DE19746179 (U.S. Patent No. 6,169,338). The Examiner again adopts the assessment of the EPO Examiner set forth in the International Preliminary Report on Patentability issued in the corresponding EPO application. With respect to the arguments made in response to the first Office Action, the Examiner states that the DE `179 patent discloses a system for recognizing the different modules.

Telephone Interview Summary

Applicant first thanks the Examiner for the courtesies extended to Applicant's attorney in a recent telephone interview to discuss the cited reference. During the course of the interview, Applicant's attorney pointed out that the claims had been amended to reflect the claim amendments made in the corresponding EPO application to overcome the same rejection based on the DE `179 reference. As a result of the amendment, the corresponding EPO application was granted as EP 1711717. Accordingly, Applicant's attorney argued that, since the EPO Examiner has already allowed the claims, the USPTO Examiner's agreement with the EPO Examiner's earlier assessment was no longer valid.

In response, the USPTO Examiner stated that the DE `179 reference discloses functional blocks with associated electronics and bus systems that monitor and control the functions of the adjacent modules. The Examiner further stated that it was his position that to accomplish such tasks, the module would necessarily recognize the functional blocks connected thereto. Therefore, the Examiner concluded that the DE `179 reference discloses all of the limitations of the claims.

Applicant's attorney further argued that, while the DE '179 reference discloses a compressed air servicing unit including function blocks, wherein each function block has interlinking blocks, this reference does not disclose an electrical concatenation block having electrical and/or mechanical decoding means for recognition of the functional block connected to the basic pneumatic block, as defined in the claims. Although an agreement was not reached in this regard, the Examiner did agree to consider such arguments if we were to formally present them in writing in response to the Final Office Action.

The Present Amendment

In response to the Final Office Action, Applicant has further amended independent Claims 1 and 14 to define additional features not found in the prior art. Specifically, Claims 1 and 14 have been amended to define an electrical concatenation having a plurality of electrical plug connection elements for electrical connection with a plurality of functional blocks, wherein each of the electrical plug connection elements includes electrical and/or mechanical decoding means for recognition of the type of functional block connected thereto and to the basic pneumatic block. It is respectfully submitted that the DE '179 reference does not disclose a concatenation block as defined in Claims 1 and 14.

Instead, the DE '179 reference discloses a compressed air servicing unit comprising a main module (10) having a central unit (40) of a bus system and further comprising sub-modules (11, 12, 13) having bus subscriber stations (39). The subscriber stations (39) communicate with the central unit (40) via a bus line bar (42) so that the central unit (40) can monitor the various functions performed by the sub-modules (11, 12, 13).

The Examiner has taken the position that, to perform such monitoring functions, the central unit would inherently have to recognize the functional blocks connected thereto. However, the Examiner has not referred to any specific section of the DE '179 reference that teaches or suggests such feature, nor does the Examiner provide a basis for such conclusion.

Applicant points out that such feature is not mentioned anywhere in the DE '179 reference. Applicant further respectfully submits that, contrary to the Examiner's assertion, recognition of the type of functional block connected to the concatenation block would not be

inherently required to perform the task of monitoring the functions of adjacent functional blocks. In particular, as evidenced by the lack of any mention to the contrary in the DE `179 reference, Applicant submits that the simple task of monitoring from a central unit does not require recognition of the type of functional block connected to the central unit.

While the DE `179 reference discloses monitoring of various functional modules from a central module, there is absolutely no mention in this reference of a concatenation block having a plurality of electrical plug connection elements for electrical connection with a plurality of functional blocks, wherein each of the electrical plug connection elements includes electrical and/or mechanical decoding means for recognition of the type of functional block connected thereto and to the basic pneumatic block. More specifically, while the DE `179 reference shows a function block (13), for example, being electrically connected to the bus rail (42) via a plug connection (62, 63), there is absolutely no teaching or suggestion in this reference of providing this plug connection with electrical and/or mechanical decoding means to enable the central unit (40) to determine what type of function block (13) is being connected thereto.

In stark contrast, the electrical concatenation blocks, as defined in amended Claims 1 and 14, have a plurality of electrical plug connection elements provided with electrical and/or mechanical decoding means for recognition of the type of functional block connected thereto. Therefore, when mounting a function block to the basic pneumatic block, this function block will be automatically identified in the concatenation interlinking block and no adaptation and configuration is necessary.

Accordingly, it respectfully submitted that amended Claims 1 and 14, and the claims that depend therefrom patentably distinguish over the prior art.

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Reply to Final Office Action of March 6, 2009
Amendment Dated: May 27, 2009

In view of the foregoing amendment and remarks, favorable consideration and allowance of the application with Claims 1-2, 5-7 and 9-14 are respectfully solicited. If the Examiner believes that a telephone interview would assist in moving the application toward allowance, he is respectfully invited to contact the Applicant's attorney at the telephone number listed below.

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